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PLATINUM TECHNOLOGY

Groups celebrate El Diez y Seis

BY NONI SRIDHARA
 The Battalion

Various Texas A&M Hispanic organizations celebrated El Diez y Seis Septiembre, the day Mexico celebrates its independence from Spain, Wednesday at Rudder Fountain.

This year marks Mexico's 177th year of independence.

Students made sno-cones, played darts, took part in a cakewalk, took swings at piñatas and engaged in face painting, accompanied by a variety of mariachi music.

Lori Guzman, Hispanic Business Students Association treasurer, publicity chair for Hispanic Presidents' Council and a sophomore business administration and international management major, said she thinks this celebration is a great way to start off Hispanic Her-



itage Month.

"This celebration raises awareness about other Mexican celebrations besides Cinco de Mayo. It also helps the lesser known Hispanic Organizations gain exposure," Guzman said.

Angela Castro, program advisor for the Committee for the Awareness of Mexican-American Culture, said the Diez y Seis Septiembre celebration is a source of pride for Hispanic culture.

"Today signifies an independence that started to guide us in the direction that Mexico went," Castro said.

"We also just want to share it with others across campus."

Margaret Pena, a member of CAMAC and a sophomore business major, said students of Hispanic background and members of the Hispanic community should remember their roots.

"This is just a small celebration reflecting on our past," Pena said. "More importantly, we have to remember where we came from to know where we are headed."

DNA may help solve Austin murder

14-year-old case will use new gene analyzing technology

AUSTIN (AP) — Police say a new DNA test may have helped them solve a 14-year-old murder.

Officers on Tuesday arrested a man in connection with the 1984 rape and murder of secretary Lauren Marie McCarty.

They believe it's the first homicide in Texas solved by an updated process that matches genetic blueprints found in human cells from tiny amounts of blood, saliva, semen, skin or hair samples.

"We never stop investigating a homicide, no matter how old it is," Lt. David Parkinson told the Austin American-Statesman in Wednesday's editions. "This is a case where technology finally caught up with a crime."

Richard Alan Woods, 42, was being held in a Travis County jail

without bond Tuesday, facing charges of capital murder in McCarty's death and sexual assault.

The 21-year-old was found beaten to death in her car behind Westgate Mall in South Austin on Dec. 22, 1984, five days after she was reported missing. McCarty was last seen leaving her job at the Texas Municipal Court Training Center to run an errand during lunch.

Her family in Lubbock had expected her home for the Christmas holidays.

Based on other evidence, police said, Woods was a suspect in the murder shortly after it occurred.

In the following months, according to news accounts, police took blood, saliva and hair samples from the suspect, but lab tests were inconclusive.

Police kept the samples, hoping developments in forensic analysis would give them the scientific evidence they needed in court.

Those hopes were realized two weeks ago when the Texas Department of Public Safety purchased 10 new genetic analyzers for \$780,000.

Austin Police Detective Paul Johnson, who had been assigned to review McCarty's death, decided to have the Woods samples re-examined.

In an arrest affidavit for Woods, filed in Municipal Court, the detective said DPS lab technician Jodie Williams called him Sept. 9 and reported that the state lab had matched samples from McCarty's case to Woods. The likelihood of the samples matching someone else is 1 in 16,000, Johnson said.

Man gets life sentence for killing grandchild

HOUSTON (AP) — A man convicted of strangling his 3-year-old granddaughter after she licked icing off cupcakes was sentenced to life in prison Wednesday after jurors rejected the death penalty.

The sentence means David Andrew Douglas, 49, a restaurant dishwasher, must serve 40 years before he becomes eligible for parole.

"Realistically, he'll die in prison," said his attorney, Poppy Northcutt.

Douglas was convicted of capital murder Monday in the Jan. 10, 1997, slaying of Shelby Lynne Barrackman. Prosecutors said he strangled Shelby in a drunken rage after finding she had eaten the icing off cupcakes while baby-sitting at his daughter's house. When he scolded the child, she began crying and Douglas "squeezed the life" out of her, prosecutors said.

The child's body was found later that day in a nearby field and Douglas eventually confessed to the crime, although his attorneys argued the confession

was coerced.

At trial, Douglas testified he did not remember killing his grandchild. He claimed he had gotten drunk off of brandy and blacked out.

"He did not recall a substantial portion of that morning," Northcutt said. "It's entirely possible he had a blackout."

But detectives found a paper bag bearing a fingerprint of Douglas and containing an empty brandy bottle within feet of the girl's body, buried in leaves.

Harris County Assistant District Attorney Casey O'Brien rejected Douglas' blackout story and said he was disappointed jurors chose life over a death sentence.

"Absolutely he deserved it," O'Brien said. "Anybody who kills their own flesh-and-blood grandchild by strangling them, that's a pretty violent crime."

Jurors deliberated four hours before handing down the sentence. Northcutt said she believed Douglas' testimony and his age convinced them to choose a life sentence.

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